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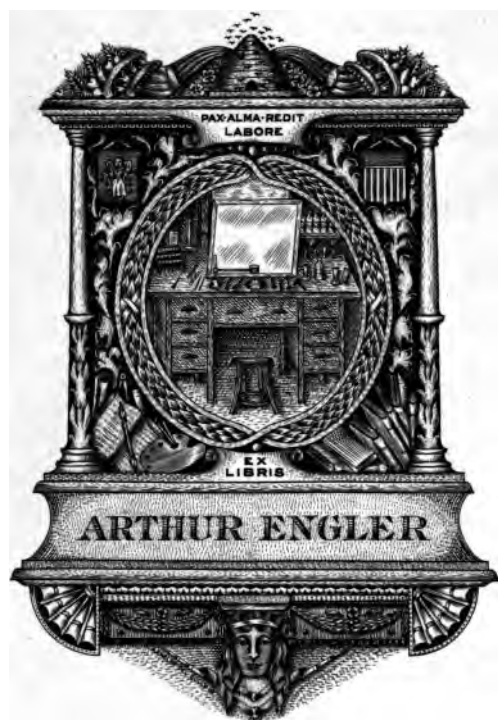
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Book-Plates—Old and New

BY
JOHN A. GADE



M. F. MANSFIELD AND
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Copyright

1898

M. F. MANSFIELD & CO

These pages are dedicated to
JOHN ALLYN
the intelligent *Scholar*
and lover of *English Books*

Book-Plates—Old and New.

“Dieses Buchlein ist mir lieb,
“Wer mir's nimmt, der ist ein Dieb,
“Wer mir's aber wieder bringt,
“Der ist ein Gotteskind.”

(From an Old German Book-Plate.)

STANDING on the Quay d'Orsay, scanning the volumes resting on the stone parapet, in the hope of some rich find, the dealer touched me on the shoulder and handed me an opened book. It was the first volume of “Le Génie du Christianisme,” containing a book-plate. Looking at it I noticed that the plate had been loosened, and behind it was attached a second one. The outer was simple in design, a couple of palm sprays encircling the name of “Gaspard Leclerc, Citoyen,” and the whole surmounted by a liberty cap. The under one, however, carried armorial bearings of four quarterings, elaborately executed, and bore the inscription “Ex-Libris

Gaspard Louis de la Trou Leclerc, Baron Ivetot, Lieutenant de la Garde Suisse de sa Majesté le roi."

The dealer had opened wide one of the closest written pages of French history. That *old* book-plate had evidently been as full of danger to the scion of the noble house, as a white cockade, and he had wisely covered it with the Phrygian cap of liberty.

And it was just this historical, or rather tell-tale quality of book-plates which primarily makes them full of interest, and which they seldom lack. But in the fulfillment of their purpose it is not essential.

A book-plate's first object is simply to identify the owner of a book, and thus protect him against loss. In doing this, his name, and merely his name, is quite sufficient, for this, in case of an honest borrower, would assure the return of the book as much as the most elaborate and artistic design.

Secondly, a book-plate secures the identification of a valued tome as part of a collection; finally it gratifies the sense of possession by giving some kind of personal character to chattels.



Most of us bedaub our very earliest primers in our largest up-hill schoolboy writing with our names and exhaustive addresses, perhaps not because the book may be dearly cherished, but because of the pride of ownership, and opportunity for personal display. What is more natural, then, that this pride of ownership should be developed in our book-plates, where there is every facile opportunity for the owner to vaunt his private tastes and aspirations.

This is also what happens, and we find book-plates almost invariably savoring of the owner's originality, or lack of it. John Leighton speaks happily of them as "those charming personalities that we find affixed within the covers of books by their owner." What more could one want to know of the Earl of Strafford than that which his garrulous book-plate relates of him? as "His Excellency, the Right Honourable Thomas, Earl of Strafford, Viscount Wentworth of Wentworth Woodhouse, and of Stamborough; Baron of Raby, Newmarch and Oversley; Her Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the States

General of ye United Provinces and also at the Congress of Utrecht, Colonel of Her Majesty's Own Royal Regiment of Dragoons, Lieutenant-General of all Her Forces, First Lord of the Admiralty (sic) of Great Britain and Ireland, one of the Lords of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, and Knight of the Most Noble Order of ye Garter ! ”

Surely few would ever dare run away with a book containing all of that—and history could hardly have blown the earl's trumpet more effectually.

Again John Collett, though not such a mighty man, is just as communicative on his book-plate, in matters of personal particulars, and we feel quite at home in his family circle after having read the printed label “Johannes Collet, filias Thomæ Collet, pater Thomæ, Guilielmi, ac Johannis omnium superstes, Natus quarto Junii, 1633. Denasci tarus quando. Der visum fuerit; interim hujus proprietanus John (sic) Collet.”

This communicative side to book-plates is recognized as one of their most charming as well as serviceable qualities. Time and

time again we meet plates suggesting interesting qualities in famous owners, of whom history, perhaps, has said but little. In one or two cases what has unfortunately perished in writing, we have been able to retrace for ourselves from the suggestive book-plate of some worm-eaten folio. Pride and the absorbing interest of a man, are easy to display and facile to read.

Apart, however, from aiding our vanity or garrulity, book-plates fulfill a genuine want of the more elevated class of book-handlers, namely, the book lovers and book-worms. Instead of the blotting scrawl of a pen, these feel the need of a neat label inside their books, and more than this, often of an artistic one. Edmund Gosse says that "the outward and visible mark of the citizenship of a book-lover is his book-plate. There are many good bibliophiles who abide in the trenches and never proclaim their loyalty by a book-plate. They are not with us, not of us, they lack the courage of their opinions, they collect with timidity or carelessness, they have no heed for the morrow. Such a man is liable to great tempta-

tions. He is brought face to face with that enemy of his species, the borrower, and dares not speak with him in the gate."

Mr. Gosse has evidently, himself, with the jealous love of a true bibliomaniac, experienced the sorrow of losing a beloved volume, as well as the infinite relief at seeing a lost one return to the fold; and the latter happens, because the book-plate inside the volume aids the borrower's memory. This is what I would emphasize.

It is hard neither to be a borrower nor a lender,—but both are easier, and much more possible, if a book-plate be placed to light the path of erring.

The three principal authorities on English, French and German book-plates—the Lord de Tabley (better known as the Hon. J. Leicester Warren), M. Poulet Malassis, and Herr F. Warnecke, as well as newer men, like Egerton Caste, Walter Hamilton, Henri Bouchet, Octave Uzanne, all agree that the term "*ex-libris*" has been universally accepted to represent what in the case of an English equivalent would be "book-plate." The two terms are not exactly syn-



Book-Plate of Charles Dickens.



onymous—that of “ex-libris,” if standing merely for the possession mark, being wider in its scope than “book-plate,” including stamps on the covers of books, as in early manuscripts or folios, and also autographs. Universal usage, however, has sanctioned the disregard of these exceptions in the employment of the term “ex-libris.”

Although several of our dictionaries omit giving it—the “Century” gives the following: “Ex-libris”—literally, from the books (of) as (1) an ex-libris exhibition (an exhibition of books from the books or library of certain collectors). (2) A book-plate printed with the name of the owner and usually his arms also, or more rarely, a device or impresa, the motto of which should have some reference to books or study.”

The American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking being a more technical reference, naturally takes more trouble about the word and gives the following: “Ex-libris”—book-plates; the ornamental designs inserted on the inside cover of a book, or upon one of the fly leaves, to indicate possession. They are usually after the manner of her-

aldry, but often with the name and residence at full length. The use of book-plates is one of the fashions of the present day and is likely to continue. Specimens occur on books printed as early as 1516, but in England, France and Germany they became very common in the last century. Many eminent engravers were called upon to do this class of work, and among the examples of that day still extant are a great number which bear evidence of superior skill. Before the year 1800, we have few "ex-libris," but since 1840 they have been tolerably numerous."

Larousse's *Grand Dictionaire Universelle du XIXième Siecle* gives: "Ex-libris; mots latins qui signifient littéralement des livres, d'entre des livres, faisant partie des livres, avec le nom du propriétaire. Ces mots sinscrevent ordinairement en tête de chaque volume d'une bibliothèque avec la signature du propriétaire."

Besides the term "ex-libris," which, if merely to base our usage on the above quoted authorities, we must consider as the correct one; there are naturally an infinite





number of variations and modifications of terms employed — even simultaneously, during the last three centuries.

We will thus meet :

“ Thomæ Prince Liber, (1704) ”

“ Insignia Librorum ”

“ Ex-libris Bibliothecæ personalis (1750) ”

“ Pertinet ad Bibliothecane ”

“ This book belongs to — ”

“ I belong to — ”

“ Austin Dobson, his book ”

“ Thomas Bailey Aldrich, his mark ”

Egerton Carter in his book, gives a long and complete list of these various terms, from the simplest to unnecessary lengthy ones.

Not until the invention and use of printing do book plates truly have a *raison d'être*, or were they either, much employed. The manuscripts of the 14th and 15th centuries and the precious collections of monastic establishments carried in the very illuminations of their titles and the crabbed handwriting of their parchments every mark necessary to prove as well the owner as the author. But with the use of type, this of course disap-

pears, and with the new necessity comes the fulfilment of the need.

It is easy to trace the early origins of book-plates, for from the first, their history has been singularly definite.

In the folios of the *German* monastic institutions we find the earliest mechanically produced book-plates, as well as some of the very finest. Perhaps here, because German churchmen had more time for the companionship of books than the building Norman or the destroying Italian. From another reason also, namely, from the fact that France and Italy emblazoned the covers of their costly bindings with the arms of their owners much more than Germany did, where the cheaper alternative was chosen, that of employing an interior mark of ownership, the economic *ex-libris*.

A splendid example of a French book-lover of the earliest period of German *ex-libris* is the well-known Count Grolier (Jean Grolier de Servin, Vicomte d'Arguisy)—and not in a single volume of his collection, from either its earlier or its later shelves, do we find traces of a book-plate. Nor was one

necessary, for from existing examples of his books, we know it was Grolier's habit to place a motto upon all the covers of his collection, this motto varying in different periods of his life. Upon the earlier works, as upon the Lucretius of 1501, it is complicated by an emblem, a hand issuing out of a cloud snatches an iron nail driven to the summit of a hillock and upon the garter, which surmounts the emblem we read, "Aque difficulter." Later, when success had overcome the troubles of his earlier life, he adopted the words of the Psalmist, placing them in this form upon his binding :

Portia mea Do
mine sit in
Terra vi
venti
um

And on the more generally known works of his library we find that charming inscription, repeated by several kindly souls of later generations, upon their book-plates, "Joanni Groliere et Amicorum," imitated originally from Maioli, to the effect that his books were

for his friends as well as for himself. Sometimes this is found at the bottom of one of the covers, sometimes written in his own hand upon one of the pages, but in all cases we notice the important fact that his *book-covers* are serving the purpose of a *book-plate*.

A very few fortunate collectors can boast of as many as three German book-plates from as early a date as the end of the 15th century. England's earliest is that from Cardinal Wolsey's library, France's from 1575 (the earliest dated armorial one being that of Alexandre, Vicomte de Blosséonte 1611), Sweden has one from 1575, and Italy has one dated 1623. An interesting fact to notice in regard to all of these early plates is that their position in the books was generally the same as that still employed, namely, the inside of the front cover, though there might at times also be a secondary one, inside the back cover, of different design.

It is natural that Germany, who has been the cradle of almost all the graphic arts, should also be the pioneer in their various forms of application. To the delight of

book-plate collectors, Germany's truly great delineators found this minor art not unworthy of their attention, but spent it lavishly, so that now old German specimens, as in the case of Hans Igler's plate of 1479 (bought by the well-known antiquarian, Ludwig Rosenthal, of Munich), are valued at as high a price as a thousand marks.

Only a very few German examples, prior to the 16th century, are extant, but with its beginning we have rare specimens from Dürer's masterhand; some twenty, perhaps, whose influence upon both domestic and foreign book-plates is important and far-reaching. The good burgers, Scheurl, Ebrer, Pomer, and many another Nürnberger patrician, came for woodcuts or copper plates to place inside their cherished folios, and these (copies of which still are to be found) have played an important part among the influences forming modern German work.

With Dürer, we have naturally his other great contemporary, Holbein, handling the same work, with the only difference of that of individual style.

The 17th and 18th century plates have

little or no artistic interest, and are only of importance to heraldic colleges. Here and there we pick one out, not because of its own recommendation, but because of its owner, like Christian Ernst's or Göthe's—or the one he designed for an inspiring young lady.

First in the middle of this century comes the change for the better. The Count of Ritberg is the first to have his coat of arms executed in the style of Albrecht Dürer—and from his, to the latest modern, this becomes the happy fad.

It is natural for an art similar to that of ex-libris designing to flourish especially in Germany, with artistic felicity. For German art, from the time of Holbein down, has ever been cautious and restricted in many of the qualities most essential to good and artistic book-plate design. This we also find the case. If we look at the work of one of the latest German artists of prominence, whom I should personally call the first of living book-plate designers, we will find throughout a careful study of quality of line, of chiaroscuro and of subject, all three characteristic of the above mentioned early

German delineators. The modern I refer to is Joseph Sattler. His ex-libris success may be attributed to the fact that of greater artists he is about the only one who cheerfully sacrifices much of his time to book-plates. Also to his unconscious adoption of some of the best of immediate and prominent artistic phases. Thus he has the decorative quality of line we praise on the many Japanese prints now rapidly invading European art realms. He has rare versatility as well as ingenuity, both essentially useful to the ex-libris artist. He seldom goes too far, but grasps what is most suitable for his client and handles his ornamentation in a masterly way, so that organically forming part of the whole it nevertheless remains inferior and undisturbing to the main effect. Last of all in his praise is his classical simplicity.

Neither English nor French book-plates can be studied without first understanding their various periods and modes of classification. M. Poulet Malassis has most conscientiously, in his work, "*Les Ex-libris Français*" (1874), brought order where there formerly was chaos in the ex-libris of his own

country. The Hon. J. Leicester Warren a few years later was the first to classify English book-plates according to styles, from which their age could be deducted and a foundation laid to intelligible nomenclature. Through his efforts we seem finally able to see that light which first flickered so faintly in Daniel Parson's article of 1837 in "The Third Annual Report of the Oxford University Archæological and Heraldic Society."

Now English book-plate collectors have become sufficiently numerous and flourishing to publish a specially dedicated organ of their own, "The Journal of the Ex-libris Society."

Mr. Walter Hamilton has recently published an excellent little volume of French book-plates, stocked with good reproductions of the best French work of the various periods. It is impossible for him to classify French book-plates as lucidly or definitely as Lord de Tabley classifies English ones. This is owing partly to the fact that a great number of the early plates are anonymous, partly from their irregularity of design, and partly from the cause of the many political upheavals in France, carrying with them

corresponding revolutions, even in the minor arts. In the main, M. Poulet Malassis, Mr. Hamilton and other French authorities agree on the following :

The proportion of French book-plates which may positively be assigned to a date prior to 1650 is very small, only one "*dated*" example being known, the one I have previously mentioned.

The age of whatever other early undated ones there were, can generally be approximately decided by their style.


Omitting those produced on the provinces and on the German frontier, it will be remarked that all the plates executed within the geographical limits of France of the 16th century were essentially heraldic in character, the shields being almost invariably square in shape, and slightly curved at the bottom. So generally was the science of heraldry understood in those days, that on only about one-half of the plates was it deemed necessary to add the owner's name to the shield displaying his arms.

There were few plates at this period, at least to judge from the eagerness with which

collectors now seek them. They may all be styled (at least those carrying us through Louis XIII and Henry IV) the “pure or correct Armorial.”

The plates of André Felibien, dated 1650, mark the commencement of a period of transition in which the heraldry is still employed, no longer grand, but with simpler mantling, and with helmets displaced by coronets and these often usurped by those having no right to them. The shape of the shield also changes, from the old square form to an oval one. The number of book-plates continues small and their character uninteresting. The most noticeable are those recording—in one case the gift, in the other the legacy—of valuable books to the college of Jesuits in Paris, 1692.

But the following century is full of variations and irregularities, with *ex-libris* replete with historic charm as well as of artistic impossibility. Now and then we may be able to pick out a certain number of book-plates of similar artistic character, as for instance those termed “French Roccoco,” analogous to the English Chippendale, the variety be-



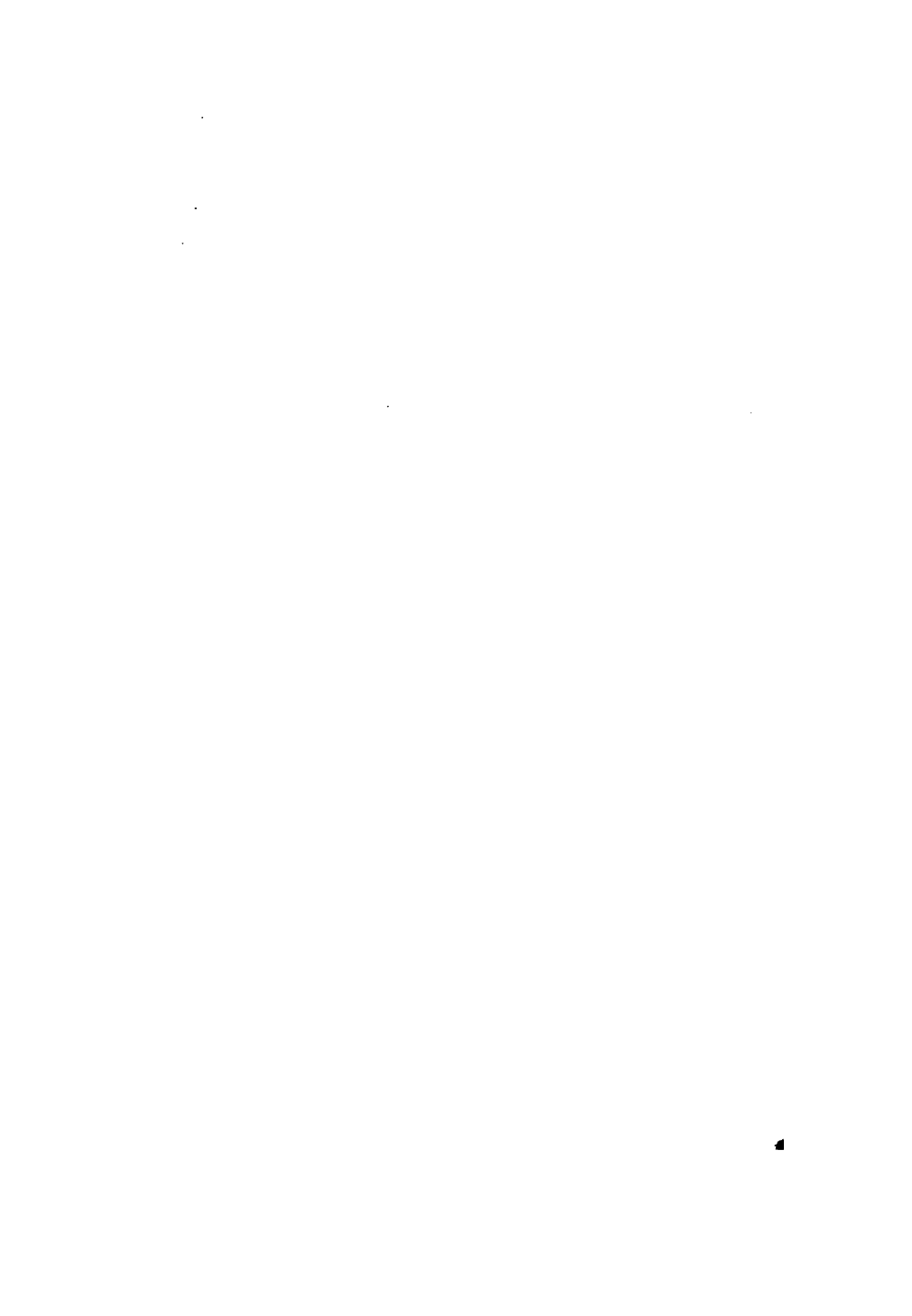
ing great and the treatment unrestricted ; or we find an abundant class of allegorical book-plates ; or specimens similar to those of the great soldiers of the time, bristling with muskets and cannons and trophies of war ; or we see heraldic *ex-libris*, with the shield no longer upright and plain but reclining and supported by Gods and Goddesses, Angels and Cupids, showing the same lack of restriction and regulation characteristic of the manners and arts of this epoch.

On many of the plates we meet names famous in French history, for book-plates were no longer the loving stamp of jealous possession of the scholar, but quite as much the fashionable and correct " thing " for the " grande dame." The beauties of the Louvre and of Versailles affix *ex-libris* to volumes, whose heavy and moral pages surely never bothered their pretty heads.

Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of Henry the Second, devoted much attention to her books, and especially to their bindings ; those executed for her being among the finest specimens ever produced. In the Château d'Anet, " la belle veuve " collected a wonder-

ful library, most of whose volumes now cost their weight in gold. In many of them we find a book-plate on which are lovingly interlaced the double monogram of Diana and her royal lover,—the triple crescent and the Stag of the Chaste Goddess also figure conspicuously.

Quite early in the eighteenth century, the rage for books and all that pertained to them, seems to have spread through France. Many interesting volumes are marked by their plates as belonging to the Comtesse de Verrue. In the library of Versailles we find shelves of books containing the *ex-libris* of Mme. du Barry, who, poor lady, could scarcely read. Mme. de Pompadour collected for herself and her king one of the richest libraries of the eighteenth century, which by her testament dated 1757, the Marquise left to her brother, le Marquis de Marigny. Pleasure was the sceptre of Louis the Fourteenth's mistress, and curiously enough, the subject of some twenty books of this her old library, which I ran across in a private collection in Paris, were all pertaining to pleasure—as comedies, light literature, etc. Most





interesting to me was the fact, that in all of them I found—a book-plate.

In the same manner, in many of the royal libraries of this illustrious period of French history, we find book-plates, sometimes merely in the form of a monogram as those of Marie Anne Christine Victoire de Bavarie, wife of the Grand Dauphin, of René de Voyer d'Argenson, Ministre d'État, and of Philippe I, Duc D'Orleans, brother of Louis the Fourteenth.

The Napoleonic era starts our century, and its book-plates, when heraldic, are easily identified by their simplicity of design and by the peculiarly characteristic cap or toque designed by David, and employed in place of crest or coronet.

From the downfall of Napoleon and the restoration of the monarchy until about 1850, art as shown in *ex-libris*, appears to have slumbered, scarcely anything can be found but a dreary repetition of heraldic plates without character and without style. They may be divided into three styles :

(1) The plain armorial shield or seal without heraldic bearings, often of the

grandest character and employed by those least entitled to bear them.

(2) The plain printed label and the type printed one surrounded by some minor framing.

(3) The allegorical or emblamatical ones, which are often humorous, or suggestive of the studies, whims or principal works of their owners—(as Victor Hugo's or Théophile Gautier's.)

One essential difference between French and English *ex-libris* is worthy of being emphasized, and holds true even in the case of the work of later men like Bouvenne, Buhot or Thiery, namely that the greater number of French plates derive their main interest from their possessors rather than from their designers or the excellence of their work—that means that French *ex-libris* are not, generally speaking, artistically good.

With names like Cipriani, Bartolozzi, Hogarth, Bewick, John Leighton and others, the rare excellence of some of the English *ex-libris* becomes apparent.


Opinions may differ widely as to the artistic merit, or the value of expending any

upon book-plates, but the subject has certainly since the beginning of our century been considered worthy of study by many Englishmen, at first of course in the shape of stray articles, the very first being one we find in the "Gentleman's Magazine" of 1822 ; soon afterwards we find others in the same magazine, in "Notes and Queries," in "Micellanea Genealogica et Heraldica" and in "The Antiquary;" but especially from the year 1880 does English literature on this subject become valuable as well as profuse. In the last few years we find the repeated editing of *ex-libris* lore, books like Castle's, Hamilton's, Hardy's, Allen's, are published, and the study of book-plates in English speaking countries has even become extensive enough to make possible the publication of special catalogues and lists of book-plate designers and engravers, similar to the recent exhaustive edition of "Artists and Engravers of British and American Book-plates," so fittingly dedicated to the memory of S. Augustus Wollaston Franks, the greatest collector of *ex-libris*, who was always ready with help to the student on the

subject and who has now rendered permanent his desire to preserve these miniature records of personalities, bequeathing his magnificent collections to his nation."

Of all this abundance of English criticism and discussion the Hon. J. Leicester Warren's book is the most extensive and thorough. Egerton Castle bases his classification of book-plates upon that of Warren with some helpful simplification; this latter modified form of the earlier may be taken as the final and best classification of English *ex-libris*. I shall adhere to it closely.

English book-plates may be subdivided according to their "style" or to their "class." That is, I draw dividing lines between the various successive styles of ornamentation employed in their design, and also between the differing classes of devices upon them. Or to expound still further, by the "style" of ornamentation, I mean the design which generally is found reproducing the prevalent taste for decoration in such things as manuscript, architectural details, furniture, etc. By the "class," I discriminate between different modes of composition, such as alle-





gorical landscapes, pure genre, etc. The greater number of book-plates up to the present half century being distinctly heraldic in character, the first great style is called that of "*Armorial* plates."

Under this we have broadly three groups, Early armorial (16th and 17th centuries). Georgian (18th century), and modern armorial (19th century).

Early Armorial. This again has three periods; Tudoresque, Carolian, and that of the Restauration, all of them very similar in character. Sir Thomas Tresham's book-plate, belonging to the first of these, is of interest, being the first English book-plate other than a "gift" or "legacy" plate carrying an engraved *date*.

In the years 1670-80 we find a considerable number of book-plates evidently of the same hand, of feeble, tentative, but distinct work. Samuel Pepys, one of these, is of course interesting, because of its possessor.

With the transition of early armorial into Georgian, which covers, rudely speaking, the eighteenth century, we find it suddenly becoming fashionable to use *ex-libris*, and

their production swelling. Happily, for historical classification, it also becomes "correct" to date them during the first twenty years of the century.

The Georgian group includes the three styles: Jacobean, Roccoco or Chippendale, and Festoon.

The usual ornamentation of a Jacobean book-plate renders it easily recognizable. The decoration is stiff and conventional, displays more solidity than grace and altogether seems less appropriate to a book-plate than the heavy rolls of mantling employed in earlier examples in the surrounding of the shield. The style continued long in fashion, and in almost any collection one is sure to find examples of it. One of the most noticeable, because of its size, is the Earl of Derby's (1702), which measures $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

One necessary heraldic irregularity is first apparent in Jacobean book-plates, namely when the plate belongs, for instance, to a public institution, a college, as some of the Oxford and Cambridge ones, or to a lady. In none of these cases can a helmet be

coherently employed ; to supply this void in decoration a distinct frame was placed round the escutcheon and this frame-work was ornamented with ribbons, palm branches or festoons.

Beginning with Roccoco or Chippendale book-plates we commence to find a close similarity between the ornamentation applied to the higher branches of art and that employed in the *ex-libris*. Wherever in artistic or architectural decoration we meet the Roccoco it is at the very first glance quite unmistakable. Likewise in book-plates of the same name, we recognize immediately in their style, the same inconsistency and lack of balance and symmetry. There is a fanciful treatment of meaningless scroll-work, and often a frilling border of open shell-work surrounding the escutcheon. The Roccoco began to be cultivated in the thirties, it was quite in vogue in the fifties, at its height in the sixties, and fell into rapid decadence about 1770.

Before Chippendaleism had died out another marked style in English book-plates had come in and was becoming generally

adopted, the "Wreath and Ribbon," or the "Festoon Style." Luckily, a reaction in artistic matters had set in and we thus find more chastity in the festoon book-plates, which still remain closely imitative in their decoration of that of the furniture filling the fashionable salons of the day.

Slowly the festoons and entanglement of ribbons become discarded and the shield is freed from all architectural surroundings.

This is the principal feature, forming the transition to our own century, the style of which is designated "Modern Armorial," and which contains generally pure and simple armorial labels, of no artistic merit whatever, and almost invariably the work of the modern die-sinker or engraver. However interesting these may be to the genealogist, they are nothing less than a nuisance to the book-plate collector looking for more than correct blazoning.

Their name is legion.

Apart, however, from this group of armorial book-plates we have the great number, to which modern plates almost exclusively belong, and in which lies the failure of book-



plate designing—of plates in which heraldry plays no part whatever in the identification of the owner of a volume, but in which the possessor's tastes or fancies or aspirations, his favorite haunts or thoughts, are depicted in some manner or other—and these are meant to prove the book his.

Any coherent classification of modern ex-libris of this character seems impossible, except according to their styles of execution; in the earlier ones, however, we even here can recognize classes.

The oldest definite one, of pictorial plates, is the "Book-pile," or the library device, in which the ex-libris give a view of a library or of portions of one.

Then we find portrait book-plates, in which the likeness of the owner is employed to secure identification. Landscape book-plates sprang up about the year 1770 and remained long in favor, many of the best ones being designed by foreign artists following the English king in 1688 to England. Lastly we have the Allegorical book-plates, which formed at no period except perhaps in the days of Bartolozzi and Sherwin, a very num-

erous class, but were rather, until later times, executed in England (in variance to France), to satisfy the occasional fancy of some eccentric book-lover. John Pine, whose features Hogarth has made us familiar with, was the first English engraver to execute an allegoric book-plate, but was soon followed in this by many famous artists, including his painter. After 1775 the plates became more and more numerous, and the allegory upon them assumes a grace in conception and execution of high merit.

Most especially to Cypriani and Bartolozzi should later ex-libris designers and collectors owe their gratitude. They showed Englishmen how easily allegory could be employed without either clumsiness or ridicule.

The earliest American book-plates are naturally of the same styles and classes as those produced in the mother country, where they were often designed, and from where they, in later times, were copied. Especially in the Southern Colonies is their exotic quality long noticeable. Here the many aristocratic families naturally preferred the work

of London engravers on their book-plates, as well as their snuff boxes and canes, to the crude work of the unpractised rustic. In the North, however, tastes were simpler and luxuries less flavored, and in the earliest plates of Bostonians and Philadelphians we thus find clumsy work, much inferior to the parallel English, but infinitely more interesting because of its Americanism.

Foremost in interest and of earliest date is the plate of William Penn, in which he styles himself "Proprietor of Pennsylvania," and which is designed in the armorial style, similar to English examples of the same period. In the same manner we find in many libraries containing books from colonial days, plates belonging to families like the Randolphs, the Dudleys, the Warrens, Van Rensselaers, Saltonstalls, etc., all close copies of contemporary English ones, probably employed in the colonies more for the sake of copying a "home" fashion than for identifying the books.

In the Boston Public Library, I found several books containing the earliest example of a book-plate actually executed in America.



W. H. S. S.

Book-Plate of Harvard College.




“ Mr. Ezekiel Price kept his office ; where ”
“ he continues to do all sort of Goldsmith ”
“ work. Likewise engraves in Gold, Silver,”
“ Copper, Brass and Steel, in the neatest ”
“ Manner and at reasonable rates.”

Then we have Paul Revere, who was undoubtedly a greater success at midnight riding than at engraving, or rather, at book-plate designing. Mr. Allen has found four examples, over his signature, belonging to Gardiner Chandler, David Greene, Epes Sargent and William Wetmore, none of them showing anything like the skill in Hurd's work.

Joseph Callender, James Turner, William Rollinson, Peter Maverick and Henry Dawkins are other better known book - plate designers of this period. The artistic career of the last mentioned was unexpectedly interrupted by a sojourn in the House of Correction on Long Island, brought about by his exercising his skill upon counterfeit money. Some time after the Declaration of Independence he forwarded the following unique petition to the Committee of Safety :

“ May It Please Your Honours—The ”
“ subscriber humbly relying on the known ”
“ goodness and humanity of this honorable ”
“ house, begs leave to lay his complaint ”
“ before them, which is briefly as follows : ”
“ That your petitioner was about six ”
“ months past taken upon Long Island for ”
“ a trespass which this house is thoroughly ”
“ acquainted, as by Israel Youngs he was ”
“ led away to perform an action of which ”
“ he has sincerely repented, and your ”
“ petitioner was torn away from an only ”
“ son who was left among strangers with- ”
“ out any support or protection during the ”
“ inclemency of the approaching winter, as ”
“ his unhappy father hath since, the first ”
“ day he was taken had but one shirt and ”
“ one pair of stockings to shift himself, ”
“ and hath been affected during his im- ”
“ prisonment at White Plains with that ”
“ worst of enemies, hunger and a nauseous ”
“ stench of a small room where some ”
“ twenty persons were confined together, ”
“ which hath introduced a sickness on your ”
“ distressed subscriber, which, with the ”
“ fatigue of traveling, hath reduced your ”



“unhappy petitioner to a state of despond-
“ency—he therefore being weary of such”
“a miserable life as his misconduct has”
“thrown him into begs for a termination”
“by death to be inflicted upon him in”
“what manner the honourable House may”
“see fit. The kind compliance of this”
“honourable House will ever lay an obliga-”
“tion on your distressed, humble servant.”

“HENRY HAWKINS.”

The war of the revolution naturally affected the production of book-plates in America for a while, but with its close and the following active publishing of books in Boston, New York and Philadelphia new book-plates reappear; some of them filled with the spirit of the time are fairly ablaze with patriotic emblems, with stars surrounding eagles perching on books, and the new flag freely unfurling in the breeze.

George Washington's book-plate is naturally interesting to all of us. The scarcity of it, as well as the name of its original possessor have caused it to be the only American plate deemed worthy of counterfeiting,




It is with the opening of foreign channels as well as by the widening of our own work, and our demands from it, that the change in modern book-plates appears. The work of the best American artists, similiar to E. A. Abbey, Walter Crane and others is demanded, and the result is, that as far as artistic design is concerned, the ex-libris become good—and generally also appropriate. That the designing of book-plates in America now-a-days is becoming of great scope and importance can hardly fail to strike anyone; everywhere are conspicuous examples. In the windows of the great publishing houses of New York, in great quantity in arts and crafts exhibitions, in the exhibitions of the Architectural League, of art societies and designing schools of every description, we find in prominent places book-plates before us. They have asserted their place, and won it, where art and literature meet.

Book-plates are running all the possibilities and dangers of becoming a popular fad, with the accompanying design of a considerable amount of trash as well as the employment of inferior delletanti. And the reverse side

of it we have also. Persons caring little for books or even for retaining them, employ good artists to design their book-plates, hoping by the extension of their patronage to gain somewhat by reflection. Thus a well-known Boston society woman has had the recently found foot of Praxiteles' Hermes photographed, a similar one moulded with a wing attached to it, by one of our first sculptors, and finally a book-plate designed from this subject by a talented artist.

Similarly meaningless book-plates and injurious eccentricities, without the faintest flavor of the librarian's individuality, are many, and it is but few of our modern ex-libris which are saved by the aptness of cutting reproof, repeatedly found in older specimens. David Garrick's plate may artistically be worthless, but even slovenly, mole-eyed Sam Johnson, when he greasily fingered the cream of Davy's Shakespeare quartos, must have grown more careful upon reading the quotation on the plate: "*La première chose qu'on doit faire quand on a emprunté un livre, c'est de le lire, afin de pouvoir le rendre plutôt.*" Older examples again seem



more frankly to speak the meanness or generosity of their owner's character. We can hardly help thinking well of Charles XIII. of Sweden, after having read on his book-plate, "Folkets wäl, min högsta lag" (the peoples' welfare, my highest law), or what a mean man Mr. Webster was, who under his book-plate put :

"John James Webster—

"He does not lend books ;"

or the cautious gentleman who wrote upon his :

"Steal not this book for fear of strife,

"For its owner carries a huge jack-knife."

Naturally, there are mottoes, in modern ex-libris, of every possible description ; inappropriate ones in the shape of puns, sometimes quaint enough, but surely lacking the sobriety befitting the inside of a book ; and also fitting ones. A good many are intended to hold the warning finger up to the thief, or in the form of the more gentle entreaty, beg him not to covet what is so beloved by another.

All of these are, to a certain extent, legitimate, though in reality, the plate in itself

should be sufficient to serve as a mark of ownership, without the corroboration of a warning, similar to the following :

“ What mon aⁿ Honeſt^e Nameⁿ doth ow^en
“ To^e hy^m ry^eht gla^ddlie myⁿ Bo^eke^s i lo^an,
“ But ſo to^e long^en y^e Bo^eke^s: be kep^t,
“ He ſhal for ſo^eth be a Knav^e yclip^t. ”

Quantities of plates are filled with sentiments in praise of books or study—“ Read and thou shalt know,” “ Vita sine libris,” “ Florence Campbell mors est,” “ Old wood and wine to burn and drink, old books and friends to read and trust,” “ Books and friends few and good;” each one standing as an additional caress given by the owner to his favorite author. The latest plate of an excellent Boston book-plate designer, Mr. Winifred Spenceley, executed for Mr. Prescott, contains upon it the names of the owner’s ten favorite authors.

Personal particulars, a favorite line or quotation, or some distinct mark of characterizing personality, we often find introduced. Thus, most appropriately, we find upon the book-plate of the traveled and scholarly autocrat, the simple motto :

“Per ampliora ad altiora ; ”

over which is designed the “Chambered Nautilus,” the

“Ship of pearl, which poets feign,”

“Sails the unshadowed main,—”

“The venturous bark that flings,”

“On the sweet summer wind its purple wings,”

“In gulf enchanted, where the siren sings,”

“And coral reefs lie bare ; ”


“Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.”

This kind of inscription, seems to me the happiest, for it gives the book-plate the essential personal factor, it is a distinct reference to the owner, and as unmistakable as a trade-mark.

Only a very few enjoy the luxury of more than one book-plate, and are able to understand the zeal of the old German divine who went to the expense of fifteen distinct copper-plates, in order to obtain a book-plate which would not look too small in the largest volume, or be too large for the smallest.

What we do find, however, among modern book-men are book-plates, the character of

which is in accordance with the library or the subject of the books, which they are to include; by this I mean one and the same person will own various ex-libris, the subject of which distinctly refers to the class of books in which it is to be placed. Egerton Castle, for instance, for the covers of his works on "Art Dimicatorie" has a drawing of "Master Gerard Thibault of Antwerp," who flourished in the days of the "Three Musketeers," with his hand on his hip and his sword on his side, standing in the middle of that dread room where, with the help of diagrams, logical, anatomical, and geometrical, the author of that astounding work "L'Académie de Espée" professed to teach any number of ineluctable and infallibly mortal strokes. Another divides his library into two portions, his working library, containing the books of reference and consultation in his work, and his purely recreation or fire-side library, and employs in each a distinctly different and characteristic ex-libris. In the former the design is that of a ship, just setting sail, accompanied by the inscription "Vogue la Galère;" in the latter, that of





THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
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a dreaming muse, thoughtfully resting the "Divine Comedy" on her lap.

In only one case are the links between ancient and modern book-plates complete, that in which the owner of the plate remains the same, down through successive centuries, as is the case with university and city libraries or public institutions. As time changes, the old plates dissatisfy ; new librarians and new designs are employed. Digging for book-plates among the shelves of Harvard University I found no less than seven different designs, covering in time about two hundred years, decreasing, alas, in interest as they approached our own decade.

Owners, designers and collectors of book-plates should take one final point to heart, namely, the fact that the ex-libris and the book it is in, are not two distinctly different members. On the contrary, they are two units of the same body, portions of what ought to be, one inseparable organism. Very recently a collector showed me his neat card-boards, on which were accurately grouped the many plates of his collection, and they

all, though partially interesting, seemed to me robbed of the greater portion of their charm, that of association. In a book, the original book, where an ex-libris comes from and where it is intended, there alone it belongs.

As Hardy so aptly says: "pasted into a book, as a mark of ownership, it is an undoubted book-plate, whereas, if taken out and fastened into a collection, it at once loses the proof of its original use so essential to its value and so material to the student of book-plates.

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